

LAW AND ORDER

139

were ineffectual. In such cases the person who thinks he is wronged may curse his suspected aggressor by calling on *Rum Adam*, the Just God, to punish him by making him halt, maimed and blind. If the aggressor should be guilty he or his relations will die. 685

In the case of disputes between individuals a solemn oath may be made with religious ceremony, and also in the case of people who are suspected of evil doing without having any definite accusers; for instance, it would be open to Hlatam to make a solemn oath that she was not a poisoner; she has not done so. About twenty years ago, however, a man in a neighbouring village who was suspected of poisoning made the requisite ceremonies to swear that he was innocent of the victim's death;¹¹ his guilt is now believed to be firmly established, for he and all his kin subsequently died the same painful and lingering death. False swearing is for the Lepchas one of the most important and unsocial crimes; the false swearer and his family would be shunned. But there is more to it than that; a perjurer among one's ancestors constitutes an hereditary taint; all the descendants of such a one will die young; and therefore in arranging marriages care must be taken to see that the intended spouse does not come of such a family.¹² 627

Personal quarrels are felt to be the concern of everybody, and every effort is made to prevent them, or to stop them once they have broken out. Annually in the autumn an elaborate ceremony is held in the monastery to destroy the trinity of devils (enmity of speech, thought and deed) who cause quarrelling; and the first action in any public or private lamaist ceremony is to invoke and destroy *Gett'r moong*, the quarrel demon, to prevent disputes among the celebrants, and especially the noisy abuse which may occur when people have drunk too much. In the unhappy event of a quarrel taking place despite these precautions a mutual friend of the two disputants will give a feast for them to try and make up the trouble. Should the quarrel continue for no apparent reason [689]

¹¹ See Chapter Fifteen, pp. 392-393.

¹² The heredities which render a person undesirable as a marriage partner are the following:— [582] ●

- (1) *Sanaar Tsuk gi* an ancestor has been killed by a bear.
- (2) *Doam gi* an ancestor has died of leprosy.
- (3) *Rundong gi* an ancestor has died of a violent jaundice.
- (4) *Ryak mat gi* an ancestor has committed perjury.
- (5) *Arot moong gi* an ancestor has died by violence.

All these disabilities are believed to be hereditary.

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 153

A child should know who are his *num-neu-zong*, that is those people with whom all sexual contact is prohibited, by the time he is nine or ten. By the time he is twelve or thirteen a boy should also know those women whom he is permitted to sleep with—usually a very much smaller number than those who are forbidden. In the case of those relations of a generation above his own—that is to say, the wives of his father's 'elder brothers', he also has to know which of these women his father has slept with beforehand, for in that case the potential partner becomes permanently forbidden. Thus for example, Chimpet can never sleep with nor inherit his 'aunt' Mrs. Datoop (Tafoor calls Datoop 'elder brother' although they are actually three generations away from a common ancestor) because several years ago his father slept with her. Since sexual relationships outside the prohibited degrees are not considered embarrassing or important, no unpleasant or guilt-ridden situation arises through the father having to inform his son about his earlier sexual life. Such subjects are rather a matter for joking, but it would be a disaster if, through ignorance, the son cut short the family line.

iv.

Owing to the wide application of the incest ban it often happens that a boy or girl has not a single potential spouse or unmarried love-partner in the same village; and consequently in the far greater number of cases a boy's wife has to be sought from a distant village, and a girl has to leave her home far behind when she goes to her husband. Of the sixty married women in Lingthem all but thirteen were from outside; and of these thirteen four had married newcomers to the village.⁴ The remaining nine were either representatives of small *ptso*, or else their husbands were.

Lepchas make their first marriage extremely young. In Lingthem there was only one girl over fourteen unbetrothed, and that was Prumtu, who had a bad squint, was reputed to be lazy, and had a rough and displeasing character. Eight boys over sixteen were unbetrothed; they were the two carpenters,⁵ three mental defectives who will never be married, and three orphans. These orphans were Satéo, who was very badly lame and without property

⁴ For a full list of married women and their place of origin see Appendix I, a, Table II.

⁵ See Chapter Four, p. 121.

582 whom the Mandal was looking after, Takshyom, Kurma's nineteen-year-old nephew, and Kanchok, the seventeen-year-old adopted son of Chelim. Of these three it is possible that Satéo will never be married; if he were hale and able to do his work properly his poverty would not stand in his way; but nobody would want to give their daughter to a poor cripple. In Lingthem there is no suitable unrelated girl; if there were one the Mandal would probably arrange the match. The other two wards are expected to be betrothed shortly, as soon as a suitable partner with a fitting horoscope can be found. Mental defectives are never married, and people with incapacitating physical defects practically never.

583 There are two stages in Lepcha marriage: *asék*, or betrothal, and *bri* or bringing home the bride. *Asék* is actually the validating ceremony at which the formal gifts from the family of the groom to that of the bride are presented; these gifts are called 'the price of the bride' and once they are accepted the groom has full access to his bride and all children born after *asék* are considered as legitimate. But until the large and expensive marriage feast or *bri* has been performed, the wife and, possibly, her children, stay at her father's house save possibly for short visits; and during this period the son-in-law is, as it were, his father-in-law's servant, and has to go and work for him whenever he is summoned and cannot leave without obtaining his permission; he is in a subordinate position, and, though he may be taunted, must never answer back.

584 Marriages are always arranged through the offices of two *bek-bu*, or between-men, one representing each party. In theory any old and experienced man who knows how to make the formal and flowery speeches in *tang-bor* or allusive periphrases⁶ can fill this rôle and in other villages there are a number of *bek-bu*; but in Lingthem in the last twenty years in all but two of the sixty marriages which have taken place the Mandal has filled this rôle. In theory the biological parents should have nothing at all to do with their children's marriages; were they to do so either the children would die young or the marriage would break up. All the negotiations concerning a marriage are carried on by the paternal or maternal uncles of the children, preferably a paternal-uncle-older-than-father, or people standing in this relation; but in point of fact the parents are always surreptitiously, and sometimes fairly openly consulted. The demand for marriage is always made in

⁶ For further explanations of *tang-bor* and examples see Chapter Ten, p. 265.

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 155

the first place by the boy's *bek-bu*, acting under the uncle's instructions; he visits the girl's village, going to some strange house, and inquires who is the man who will act as the girl's *bek-bu*. The girl's *bek-bu* then acts as intermediary between the boy's *bek-bu* and the girl's 'uncle'.

When a son-in-law is proposed some representative of the girl is always sent to the boy's village to inquire about his character, whether he is peaceful and a good worker; formerly tests of felling wood used to be imposed. Some parents take into account the prospective property of the boy, but personal appearance and the relative age of the two parties are not generally considered. The more pious lamas will only consider lamas as suitable sons-in-law. Care has to be taken that neither party suffers under any hereditary taint.⁷

It usually happens that the boy and girl do not know one another at all before the betrothal; occasionally however a boy and girl who know one another wish to marry; in such cases the boy approaches either his uncle or his *bek-bu* and ask him to enter into negotiations. When widowers with property remarry this is always the case; and usually the man will have already impregnated his wife before the first overtures are made.

There is a distinct tendency for several members of two families or neighbourhoods to marry each other; once one woman from a strange community is brought into a village, she is liable to establish further contacts between members of her old community and those of her new one; and, provided the rules of a descent are not infringed, there is a tendency for a woman's daughters to marry back into their mother's old village. It is quite common for two siblings of one family to marry two siblings of another, whether it be two brothers marrying two sisters, or an exchange of sisters, each brother marrying the sister of the other. The marriage of two people does not affect the subsequent marriages of their families in the same generation in any way, but it is considered preferable for, say, the elder brother of the groom to marry the elder sister of the bride, and the younger, the younger; contrary arrangements are not forbidden, but they involve a readjustment of relationships which is felt to be awkward and uncomfortable, and I never came across nor heard of such an arrangement. In the case of the exchange of daughters the full marriage presents are meant to be given on both sides, and this is nearly always done, though in

⁷ See Chapter Five, note 12, p. 139.

● 582 point of fact it comes to an exchange of identical goods. The formal
431 marriage gifts are always meant to be new and unused; and it is a
point of honour for all those who can afford to give them to do so.

584 The length of the period between *asék* and marriage varies
between a few weeks and a few years according to the wealth of
the people providing the marriage feast. In the case of young
people this is entirely provided by their families and does not
entail any feeling of indebtedness nor does the expense have to
be repaid; it is an absolute gift, a further link in the chain of
mutual benefits which bind Lepchas together. This is not the case
if men of property wish to marry or re-marry; they have to
provide the expense themselves and if they borrow from others
they have to repay what they borrow. In the case of poor people
who wish to marry there are two possible solutions; from a
suitable groom the girl's parents may consent to receive the sym-
bolical gift of a piece of roast meat (*akur*) instead of the proper
asék presents, which represent a cash value of about Rs. 60;
or the Mandal may advise and help the prospective groom to give a
feast, at which all the neighbours will contribute in money or
kind to pay for the marriage feast. In Lingthem this has been done
twice in recent years. The cash value of the gifts, animals and
grain demanded by the complete *asék* and marriage ceremonies is
computed to be about Rs. 300. By far the greater part of this is
involved in the food consumed at the marriage feast.

583 There is one other potential arrangement by which men without
597 much property or a large family can obtain a wife. In a family
where there are no sons it is possible, if the parents so wish, that
the groom, instead of taking the daughter away to his home,
shall live permanently in the home of his parents-in-law, acting
as their son, and eventually inheriting their property; in such
cases only small *asék* presents are given and the expense of the
lesser marriage feast is borne by the girl's family. But this arrange-
ment is not very popular or very common; people do not much
like the idea of having a stranger permanently in the home, and
prefer either to adopt a young child, or else to let the property
pass at their death to a *ké-tsop*;^a and for most men the probable
permanent separation from their families and friends is undesirable.
This resident son-in-law is called *komok myok*. There are two
men so situated in Lingthem, Tempa and Kurma *gyapön*, both
somewhat maladjusted. Kurma is not a real stranger, for he was

^a See Chapter Three, p. 106.

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 157

born in the neighbouring village of Panung; the wife to whose house he went is now dead, though her mother is still living there; Kurma is *asék'd* to another woman whom he hopes to bring home in 1938. Besides these two men there are two other men living in Lingthem who were not born there; these are Katel, whose story has already been told, and Takneum *youni*, who was adopted as a boy by his father's married sister.

v

It sometimes happens that after *asék* has been performed the boy and girl feel a really strong repulsion for one another. In many cases a girl will simulate repulsion and will refuse to let her groom sleep with her; but this is thought to be chiefly due to shame and to dislike of having to leave her parents' home; and therefore the young people are cajoled and bribed and threatened and even sometimes beaten to make them like one another. If however the repulsion felt is really strong and there seems no possibility of breaking it down, two solutions are open; either the whole arrangement is called off and the gifts or their equivalents in money returned, or else an alternative spouse, usually a younger brother of the groom and occasionally a younger sister of the bride, is offered instead. The best example of these arrangements can be shown in the history of Rigya. Rigya, who is twenty-two years old, was *asék'd* when he was about fifteen to one girl, but they did not get on at all well together and after a time the Mandal arranged for the marriage payments to be given back. His eldest brother, Aplung, was also *asék'd* to a girl he disliked; he therefore gave her to his youngest brother, Gyatso, who did not want her and ran away to Gangtok to work as a carpenter; thereupon the girl was given to Rigya, who was the middle brother. This is a somewhat irregular arrangement because Gyatso was younger than Rigya; but since Aplung was older she was looked on as being originally the wife of the elder brother and therefore marriageable. Aplung subsequently married a widow, a woman considerably older than himself.

Most consummated marriages are stable and divorce or separation is very rare. The chief cause of divorce is usually for incompatibility of character or refusal to work properly on the part of the wife. If a man sends his wife away he has to pay a fine of Rs. 88 to the girl's father and has to divide with the wife all the movable

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 163

for women other than their wives produce and have produced many disquieting situations, sometimes leading to open disputes and even suicide.¹⁰ Such disturbances can however be put down to uncontrollable personal temperaments, which go strongly against the Lepcha ideal of behaviour; the regulations of the Lepchas have been devised to reduce to a minimum the conflict and aggression within the group. This has not however been followed by added aggression to people outside the group; William Sumner's generalisation¹¹ does not hold good here, possibly because through the greater part of their history Lepchas have only had slight and intermittent contact with other groups. Practically all the aggression manifested by the Lepchas is directed against and is supposed to originate from hostile supernaturals. Historically Lepchas have nearly always answered outside aggression by retreating and hiding in the forest; and in the semi-historical stories which they recount about the invading Tibetans or Nepali or Bhutanese, the Lepchas get the better of their enemies, not by violence but by cunning—through cutting off the water supply, shooting fire into the fortress, blocking up mountain paths, and similar devices.

It is worth noting that the Lepchas who live in mixed communities, though they generally know of the theoretical right of access to potential spouses, all deny with great apparent sincerity that these rights are ever taken advantage of; many who have imbued the views of their neighbours the Tibetans or Nepali, regard them with horror. The Lepchas of Zongu themselves are culturally tolerant and know that their neighbours have different rules of conduct; for example the Tibetans forbid the marriage of aunt and nephew, but both they and the Nepali permit the marriage of first cousins which for the Lepchas is the most horrifying form of incest. The habits of other races, particularly the Tibetans, are a fairly constant subject of conversation; many of these habits are viewed with disgust, but disgust tempered by considerable amusement.

In the case of two or more marriages taking place within the same generation of two groups, the levirate and sororate claims are readjusted to meet the situation; for example if two brothers marry two sisters, the younger brother will not have the right of access to or be able to inherit his elder brother's wife, because she

¹⁰ Instances of these disruptive situations are given further on in this chapter and in Chapter Fifteen.

¹¹ 'The relation of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility and war towards others-groups are correlative of each other.' W. Sumner: *Folkways* (Boston 1906), p. 12.

- 582 will also be his wife's elder sister and equated with his mother-in-
 835 law; similarly the elder brother will not have access to or be
 able to marry his wife's younger sister, because she is equated
 with his daughter-in-law. If there was an interval between the
 first and second marriages both parties would have the right of
 access until the second *asék*; to avoid such complication it is
 desirable that the marriages of pairs of brothers and sisters take
 place as nearly simultaneously as is possible.

The semi-diagrammatic complementary relations which are
 set up when two brothers marry and have sons are worth tabu-
 lating. The elder brother has to respect his younger brother's
 wife as his 'daughter-in-law', but his son need not as he can
 sleep with and inherit her; the younger brother need not respect
 his elder brother's wife as he can sleep with and inherit her, but
 his son must respect her as his 'big mother'.

- 587 In the event of a widow being left with young children it is
 essential that a husband be supplied from her husband's group,
 and this is usually done without any sort of friction. Thus Chano,
 himself a childless widower, recently inherited the wife and three
 young children of his dead elder brother. This is the one situation
 in which the provision of a levirate spouse is imperative; if the
 widow is sterile or the children all grown up and married there is
 no compulsion and such women often return to their own home.
 Not always however; at the age of 68 the second Dorjé Lapoon
 married *en secondes nocés* his widowed 'aunt' (actually the wife
 of his grandmother's brother's son) Pumri, who was then aged 73.
 The two had however carried on a fairly constant concubinage in
 the last forty years of Pumri's husband's lifetime.

The chief disadvantage of the sororate and levirate claims is
 that it quite occasionally happens that there is considerable
 disparity between the ages of the spouses, and in particular that
 the woman will be considerably older than the man. A relatively
 poor family is liable to hand on a satisfactory woman even to a boy
 of nine or ten; the converse seldom occurs as a man will not
 accept a very young girl as a second wife. During my stay in
 Lingthem such a case was causing considerable dispute. Kahlyeu's
 grandson, Chélé, at the age of ten had inherited the wife of a dead
 younger uncle. This girl had only been married a year before the
 death of her husband, and was at the time only fifteen, but the
 psychological difference in their ages was far greater than the real
 difference. Chélé was a very bright and intelligent little boy, but

RELIGION I: LAMAISM

209

858 dying before the age of about ten are usually said to be reincarnations of dead people whose life was cut short before it had attained its full span (for the Lepcha the normal human span of life is four score years) and have therefore returned to the world as a human being to finish their term of life before proceeding to their next incarnation. Although live children are so insignificant, dead ones

775 turn into num-*een moong*, almost the most malevolent and dangerous of all devils. As a generalisation it may be said that in so far as human beings remain attached to this world after death, it is as devils, and, the younger the dead person, the more dangerous the devil he may leave behind. Even seeing dead people in dreams (unless they are climbing snow mountains, which indicates that their souls are entering heaven) is dangerous; for the simulacra of the dead are in reality the devils which caused the death.

755 In the case of minor physical injuries no religious cure is
751 employed; but more serious accidents, such as falling from a tree or a high rock, are considered to be due to malevolent supernaturals and exorcisms have to be performed to avert the repetition of such injuries for the sufferer or other members of his household. If one member of a household dies a violent death the survivors should repeat annually and at the birth of each new member of the family certain apotropaic rites. It will be remembered that a propensity to violent death, like a propensity to being chased by a bear, is an

● [582] hereditary taint which must be guarded against in selecting a marriage partner.

787 Horoscopes differ somewhat in their emotional affect from the other lamaist ceremonies. They are obligatory and implicitly believed in and have very considerable influence on the life of the person for whom the horoscope is cast. The first horoscope is cast on the third day after a child's birth; in this is determined the child's character, future employment and span of life, and also those illnesses and dangers with which he is threatened and the ceremonies that the parents must perform to avert these dangers. The second horoscope is cast at the instance of the parents and uncles before a marriage is arranged to see that the conjunction of the joint horoscopes is not endangered by unfavourable omens. This is the least compulsive horoscope of all; there are at least twelve signs in it which can be positive or negative and in by far the greater number of horoscopes the signs are mixed; only if the sign for children is entirely negative will the marriage almost always be abandoned. The third horoscope is cast when a person has completed his third, or occasionally

881 through ritual and symbolism men attempt to arrogate to themselves women's physiological functions; perhaps the most striking of these rites is the urethral sub-incision practised by some Australian tribes. Since, unfortunately, nothing is known of the other Mongolian peoples of the Himalayas, it is impossible to state whether this notion is peculiar to the Lepchas, or whether it is shared by their Northern neighbours. The Hindus and the Nepali converts to Hinduism stress overtly the rivalry between the sexes, and adduce the inferiority of women through their magically dangerous and infectious functions of menstruation and child-birth.

886 Just as there is no formally marked beginning of sexual life, so there is no formally marked end of it. The menopause is ignored; the dream of copulation with a supernatural, which marks the menses, is meant to continue after it; and sexual pleasure is considered to be equally strong at any period of life. There appears to be no fear of impotence; sexual appetite and an appetite for food are openly equated, and it is considered that, except through illness or old age, the loss of one is as unlikely as the loss of the other.

933 Some men make a distinction between pre-puberty and post-puberty sexual activity, but this distinction is personal and not cultural. Most men, when talking of their past lives, emphasise what was their first 'real' sexual experience; but some place this first experience very early, at the age of eleven or twelve. I think the operative distinction in the mind of the Lepcha is whether the sexual adventure formed part of a play, or was undertaken seriously for its own sake.

582 Lepcha society gives the children a sexual rôle very early; girls
584 are betrothed and occasionally married from the age of eight
[833] onwards, and boys from the age of twelve. In Lingthem it seems as though this very early age for betrothal has been somewhat raised in recent years; Mrs. Datoop and one or two other of the elder women in the community were betrothed at the age of eight and married shortly after; but in 1937 there was no betrothed girl aged less than twelve, nor was any young man betrothed to a girl under that age. It is quite probable that this change in the age of betrothal is local and temporary; the Lepchas did not consider that the situation had altered in any way. Even today most young people are betrothed before or at any rate as soon as they arrive at physical puberty, and consequently enter that state with an already selected sexual partner. In 1937 the only unbetrothed girl over thirteen was Prumtu; there were eight boys over sixteen un-

SEX, MARRIAGE AND MATURITY

317

betrothed, but of these three were mental defectives, one was a cripple, and two were carpenters just returned from the state school at Gangtok;¹ the remaining two were adopted children, and in both cases the adopting fathers said they were searching for suitable spouses. 582
584

Some of the boys and girls may have had a little sporadic sexual experience before betrothal, especially if their elder siblings of the same sex are married; but it is by no means unusual for both parties to be complete virgins at the time of betrothal. The period between betrothal and marriage is usually the time of greatest sexual adventure and promiscuity; but this naturally depends on the affection the two betrothed feel for one another and, to a lesser extent, on the distance between their two villages; a betrothed pair who are fond of one another may quite probably be sexually exclusive; where they do not get on, and particularly if there is overt hostility, they are likely to look elsewhere. 584
836

A marriage is never arranged by the parents of the child concerned; were the parents to do so either the parties would die young or the marriage would break up. In Lingthem the marriages are usually proposed by the Mandal and negotiated through the intermediary of the child's uncles and grandparents on both sides, and especially the father's elder brother, or if such a man does not exist, anyone who stands in a similar relationship. Thus, in the marriage of Datoop's children, Tafoor acted as the 'father's elder brother'; actually Tafoor is nineteen years younger than Datoop and they are four generations removed from a common ancestor (their respective paternal grandmothers were biological sisters); Datoop was an only child and Tafoor the most responsible related man of the same generation; since they are connected by females they are obviously of different *ptso*. 584

All the real marriage negotiations are carried on between two *bek-bu* (between-men) representing each side. Any experienced and tactful man with the exception of the spouse's father, who knows the correct things to say and the correct way to say them and has a sufficient vocabulary of *iang-bor* may take this rôle; in Lingthem the Mandal has performed this office for nearly every couple in the last twenty years, but in other villages a variety of people perform this rôle and the choice of *bek-bu* is a personal one dictated by the friendliness of the betrothed person and his family. In by far the greater number of cases the two children to be betrothed do not

¹ See Chapter Four, p. 121, and Chapter Six, p. 153.

APPENDIX I

457

TABLE III

FECUNDITY OF MARRIED WOMEN

The Lepchas are mainly exogamous: that is to say by far the greater number of women in the community have come in from outside, and by far the greater number of girls will marry into other villages. In the second column the following signs are used:

L—from Lingthem or the other smaller villages under Chala Mandal.

Z—from Zongu, the Lepcha reserve in which Lingthem is situated.

Taking the average number of inhabitants per household in Lingthem —5.3—as valid for the whole area, the total population of Zongu is about 2000.

X—Lepcha from outside Zongu.

XX—Partly Sikkimese.

The question marks in this column indicate that I could not discover if the women were born inside or outside Zongu. None of the women so marked are from Lingthem, nor have any admixture of foreign blood.

It is probable that the number of children who have died in infancy is an understatement, as the Lepchas attach little emotional importance to children dying very young and may forget about them. Of the sterile women under sixty, I am certain, however, that they have never borne a child alive or dead.

sb. in columns 5 and 6 stands for a still-born child.

P. in column 7 means that the woman was pregnant in April 1937.

Date of birth	Place of origin	Live children		Dead children		Age at birth of first child
		M	F	M	F	
1852	?	1	1	1	?	?
1858	L	1	?	?	?	?
1863	?	2	4	1	1	?
1864	?	?	?	?	?	?
1866	?	1	?	?	?	?
1870	Z	1	—	1	—	?30
1871	Z	—	—	—	—	—
1871	L	—	—	—	—	—
1873	L	—	1	2	—	?
1875	Z	2	1	1	—	?
1875	?	—	—	—	—	—
1877	X	—	—	1	1	?
1877	X	—	—	—	—	—
1881	Z	—	3	1	—	?
1883	Z	2	3	1	—	19
1884	X	—	—	2	—	?
1885	Z	2	3	—	—	?
1887	Z	3	1	—	—	24

842
[582]

[59] already noted, that he is the only man in the district who knows how to keep away rain. As it is, he is the mainspring of the local Church, and is destined one day to be its head.

● [582] He is at present thirty-five, and was married at seventeen to a girl five years his junior. Before becoming a Lama he studied for five years. In those days there were six other boys all learning with the same teacher, and they used to compete amongst themselves, and so learnt rapidly. His father, too, was a Lama and in his younger days spent some years at a monastery in Gangtok in order to receive higher instruction.

[595] While he was there, though already married, he fell in love with a girl who eventually became his second wife. On his return to Lingtem he told his wife what had happened; but she argued that since she had borne him two children it was unnecessary to bring another woman to the house. Tafoor's father, however, said he would love them both equally; and his wife therefore agreed to the second marriage. Although Tafoor's mother did not know it, the second wife had already given birth to a daughter while the pair were living together in Gangtok, and this child was later married to the son of the local artist. After the second wife had established herself in

[587] Lingtem she refused to allow Tafoor's father to have any further connection with his first wife, whereupon Tafoor's mother married a man named Dunbyo, with whom she still lives, Dunbyo giving Tafoor's father a pig as compensation.

Tafoor has four children, the eldest of whom, Chimpet, a boy of fourteen, is learning to be a Lama. He is rather sullen in appearance and spends most of his time catapulting birds, in the imitation of which he displays quite remarkable skill.

[861] His head is badly scarred, due to the fact that his mother, a rather ill-tempered woman, hit him with a burning brand when he was small. His father says he is quite intelligent but will not apply himself to his studies, which he started some six months ago. The second Dorje-Lopön, his grandfather's brother, is teaching him, and so he lives at home. Chimpet says he wants to grow up quickly, so that he can enjoy himself properly. He appears to be unusually young for his age, and has not yet reached the age of puberty.

THE PEOPLE

87

and has not yet reached the age of puberty. In spite of this,¹⁵⁹ however, he¹ is well aware of the facts of life, and a few years^[364] ago was seduced by his uncle's wife, a woman of thirty, with whom he is still on intimate terms.

Tafoor's second child is a girl, and although three years¹⁵⁹ younger than Chimpet she looks much older. She already⁸⁶⁶ nurses the two younger children, and knows how to cook, and is perfectly capable, so her father tells me, of running the house. No arrangements have so far been made for her marriage, but Tafoor hopes to hear of a suitable partner during the course of the next few years.

* * * * *

Chodo is Tafoor's younger brother, and so far has only¹⁵⁹ reached the rank of *Ka-Ne*. He was thirty this year and his^[582] wife, whom he married some ten years ago, is the same age. He told me that when he was about five or six he used to play^[857] at making little houses out of sticks and leaves; also he was⁷⁷⁶ fond of playing with swings, but his parents would not let him do this in summer-time because, so they said, the demons would mistake him for fruit.* As a child he was frightened of devils and did not like walking about alone at night; and even now he does not like going by himself in the forest after dark. When he is alone and feels frightened he prays all the time to Guru Rimpoche to keep him safe. He never carries a^[778] charm "like ignorant people," because if he did this Guru Rimpoche would think he had no faith in his prayers and would therefore do nothing to help him. He knows that his wife has relations with Chimpet but does not mind in the least: "unless one learns, how can one ever be proficient?"^[834] He did the same thing himself as a boy; and even now⁸⁶⁴ frequently goes to the forest with Tafoor's wife, with whom he is of course legally entitled to cohabit. As a child he was sent to school at Mangen but only read the first three books. After this he spent a year in the Maharaja's palace in

* Fruit, as it swings in the breeze, is thought to be plucked by passing devils. Cf. *The Golden Bough*.

¹ [i.e., Chimpet, the son of Tafoor, an Umzet. - Analyst]

[159] two, but, so his son says, spends most of his nights with the
[595] senior.

Mrs. Chôteмбу number one, like her mother, is a Mun, but is mainly in request as a singer of songs, of which she has an immense repertoire. I once came across the family working in the fields and asked her to give us a tune. I think she misunderstood my meaning; for it was only when I told her that I was really a *Ge-lug-pa*, or celibate monk, that she finally left me alone: but it took some months to convince [832] her. I should add, however, that her advances were always made in public and caused much amusement to the rest of the family.

* * * * *

Datoop is the elder son of the senior Dorje Lopön. Until relieved by Lumbar he acted as Chôteмбу for over three years, and is now awaiting advancement to the rank of [464] Umzet. As a boy he spent some years in Gangtok, where [463] he was trained as a carpenter, at which trade he is still employed. He superintends most local building, and with the assistance of the *Hlaribu*, or artist, made most of the woodwork in the Lingtem monastery. He was married at [582] nineteen to a girl seven years his junior, but the pair did not live together until after his return from Gangtok, some five years later. He becomes almost heated when discussing his father's affairs, but thinks it unlikely that he will marry again, since "he is now too old for that sort of thing." He says he would rather live in some place like Gangtok, "where there are people to see and gossip to hear; bazaars to walk in and all sorts of things to buy; but what can one do? Town life is easy, since one does not work in the fields: but without work in the fields money is not forthcoming, so it is better to stay at home." Datoop thinks it good to die rich, [556] since then one's children can do the death ceremony in a proper manner. It would be nice to live to eighty, as [588] up to that age most men can still work in the fields: but to live on till a hundred is definitely staying too long. One does not want to be a burden to others.

Pemba is Datoop's eldest son and is now twenty-seven,¹⁵⁹ his wife being four years younger. He had already started⁵⁸² his Lama's training when he was summoned to work in Gangtok. He remained at the palace for nearly ten years, when he left the Maharaja's service at his own request.⁴⁶⁴ Like his friend Chodu, he too was a scullion. When he²⁹⁷ was in Gangtok he learnt to wear boots and as a result still has very tender feet. His mother says that he was not weaned early; and perhaps because of this he was³⁶² a very nervous child. We often noticed that he flinched at any sudden noise, and even now he says he cannot bear the sight of blood. He used to cry a lot when he first left home, but after his return on leave he soon found that he wanted to go back to Gangtok again. His parents told me they were very anxious while he was away from home and always used to visit him once a year. He was sometimes⁸⁶¹ beaten as a child and would threaten to throw himself in the fire; but his parents would only laugh, and told him that if he really wished to die they would not prevent him. Although he still is rather nervous, and much more retiring than the average Lepcha, he does not appear to be in any way maladjusted. He is completely bilingual, speaking¹⁹⁷ Nepali almost as well as his own language.

Pichi, aged twenty-three, is Datoop's second son. He has⁴⁶⁴ just returned from Gangtok, where he has spent the last⁴⁸³ eight years or so learning to be a carpenter. While he was still away from home his parents decided that it was time¹⁵⁹ for him to be betrothed; but he sent back word that he was⁵⁸⁴ too busy to leave his work. For this reason his brother, a boy of fifteen, acted as his proxy at the ceremony. When Pichi came home the following year he at once made it clear that he had no intention of proceeding with this prearranged marriage, and said that when he wished to marry he would choose a wife for himself. The Mandal, who made all the arrangements, was somewhat perplexed at this state of affairs, such a case never having arisen before. He now¹⁵⁹ thinks that in order not to cause offence the best thing is⁵⁸⁵
⁵⁸⁸

159 for the girl to marry both brothers. If this is done only Pichi
 585 will be required to carry out the ceremony; and having done
 588 this he can hand the girl over to his younger brother. There
 would be no objection to him marrying what would
 theoretically be a second wife, should he later wish to do so.

159 In the meantime Pichi gets all the amusement he wants with
 [85] his elder brother's wife. This he told me late one night when
 he was somewhat the worse for wear. In addition to his own

[19] language, he also speaks Sikkim Tibetan and is the only man in
 the village who can read and write Nepali. Because of this all
 official correspondence comes to him for translation. He has
 not yet fully readjusted himself to the simplicity of village life,
 but, even so, already thinks he would rather live at home.

● [582] Datoop's wife is one of the most outstanding characters
 in Lingtem. She was married at twelve but did not live
 with her husband until after his return from Gangtok.

[462] Unlike most other women, she is often to be seen in charge
 of work and her orders are instantly obeyed. She has the
 reputation of giving good food at her house, but, according
 to Tafoor, would be a better cook if she took a little less to
 drink. She has a pleasing open face, but her appearance
 is somewhat spoilt by a missing canine tooth. She came
 originally from a village beyond Mangan, and still visits her
 old home occasionally, where her brothers are still living.

[301] She has better jewellery than any other women in the
 [423] village; this she bought with the proceeds of her private
 fields. In her opinion women have a hard time, and no
 private life at all. She thinks, however, that grown-up girls

[581] are glad to get away from home and that marriage is the
 best state for them. Like her husband she, too, is a Lama
 and holds the rank of Chötembu; and as such has the power
 to beat up people in the monastery. I asked her what sort

[684] of offences would merit her interference and she replied,
 without the slightest hesitation, "having sexual intercourse
 inside the building, or within its grounds." She added that
 it would be considered slightly shameful for a woman,
 although an Inebu, to beat a man; but nobody really minds.

of this offering is known as *Chandong*. It was put on a ⁷⁹⁶winnowing-tray, on top of which an old piece of red cloth had ^[247]been spread, the whole being then placed in position on the altar.

Pom-Ri is seventy-two, and has recently married the ^[532]second Dorje-Lopön. She said that this particular part of the ceremony was always done by a female Mun; but she could give no reason for this. After placing the eggs in position she took each one in turn and pressed it to her forehead, just as Gongyop had done. She said, however, that she was not using them for divination but was merely dedicating them to Konchen.

A tray of burning juniper was now brought and put on the ^[824]ground to one side of the altar. This was to dissolve the ^[821]clouds on the mountain, in order that the god might see the sacrifice. It was ineffective, however, for Konchen remained invisible throughout the day. Pom-Ri now took a small drinking cup, round the rim of which butter had been smeared. A female helper, also a Mun, stood at her side and ladled *chi* into her cup from time to time. Pom-Ri now started to chant, assisted by Kahlyeu, who sang more or less in unison with her. He is not himself a Mun, but likes to take part in these ceremonies. Whenever she sprinkled the *chi* from her cup he threw out a handful of grain from his cap, which he held all the time in his hand. Their incantations were almost inaudible, but I could distinctly hear the word "Konchen" uttered at the moment when *chi* and grain were cast away.

After about twenty minutes Pom-Ri and her two helpers turned round and continued their chanting facing down the valley. I was told that having propitiated Konchen they had now turned their attention to the demons of the plains.

While this ceremony was in progress a goat had been slaughtered in the bushes just behind. It was killed in the usual way, by thrusting a bamboo stake stuck into its heart. At ^[112]the place where it was killed a fire was burning, on which the meat was lightly singed. The head, liver (impaled on a stick),

597 A childless couple nearly always adopt a child, usually that of some near relation. It often happens that a woman gives birth to a child of her own a few years after she and her husband have already adopted one. An adopted son is better than none; but there is no doubt that the practice is to a great extent resorted to in the hope of getting a child of one's own. This belief is so common that even among Lepcha Christians in the Gangtok district (so Miss Scott tells me) it is common for people to adopt a child temporarily, on the understanding that it is returned to its parents as soon as the adopting mother gives birth to a child of her own. In Jongu, however, the adopted child [428] does not normally return to its own parents and remains the legal heir of its adopting father, even should he later have a son of his own.

883 Of adolescence there is little to be said except that it does 831 not seem to result in psychological disturbance such as is common in our society. But there is, of course, here no [521] sexual repression at any time of life. Sex is, indeed, almost the people's sole recreation, and the most common topic of conversation on practically every occasion. This state of affairs is more commonly associated with a society such as our own, in which sexual experience is, to a great extent, denied to the young. One would not expect to find it in a primitive culture in which at no time is there the slightest difficulty in indulging in sex to the body's content. It should [212] be realised, however, that the Lepchas have no mental 535 occupation whatsoever. They do not read; they do not even dance, except on rare ceremonial occasions, and once the day's work in the fields is done there is only drinking and sex. Whether this is or is not a desirable state of affairs I leave it to the reader to judge; but at least the people are free from the evils which undoubtedly result from the unfulfilled desires aroused by the erotic stimulation of the cinema and such-like shows.

• 582 Marriage usually takes place between the ages of fifteen 584 and twenty, and is generally arranged by the parents of the

boy and girl concerned. The children are, however, con-582 ●
 sulted and are never forced to marry against their will; but at [584]
 this age they do not seem to have any very strong likes or
 dislikes, and seem usually willing to marry anyone whom
 their parents suggest. I do not think the question of love ever [581]
 arises, and am personally doubtful whether such a state of
 mind is known to the Lepcha; but the reasons for this will be
 more fully discussed in the following chapter. There is a 584
 tendency, however, for boys who go away from home to work
 to insist on choosing their own partners, and to delay their
 marriage until a somewhat later age than the normal. There
 are, of course, not many such; but under the feudal system 642
 prevailing each village has, according to the size of its 874
 population, to provide a boy or two either for service in the
 Palace at Gangtok or for training in the State Carpentry
 School. These boys are usually away from home between,
 roughly, the ages of twelve and twenty, but some prefer to
 stay on. They seem to find it a little difficult to fit into the 154
 scheme of village life when they first return, but in Lingtem
 there was no apparent case of a boy being permanently
 maladjusted on this account. They settle down quite
 comfortably after the first few months and are probably
 better, in the long run, for the additional experience. Most of
 them learn to speak Nepali, and one or two can read and [191]
 write a little. The system has much to commend it, and 574
 enables the Maharaja to keep in personal touch with his
 tenants. This would otherwise be impossible, since a personal
 visit to Jongu, Lepcha hospitality being what it is, would be
 too much of a drain on the district's resources. This His
 Highness fully realises, and wisely keeps away.

[p. 222 is blank]

Gyatso; but such is not the case. As it happens, everything⁵⁸⁷ has turned out for the best, and Rigiya and his wife are living⁴²⁸ happily together. It should be noted that, technically speaking, he might be said to have married his younger brother's wife, thus contracting an incestuous alliance. It should be remembered, however, that the girl was first married to his elder brother, so that from a legal point of view he is held to have married his elder and not his younger brother's wife.

Cheli, aged ten, is the grandson of old Kahlyeu by his second wife. His father died when he was a baby, whereupon his mother remarried almost at once and went to live in some other village, leaving him to the care of his grandfather. Kahlyeu also had a son by his first wife. He too died young, leaving a son who himself died a few years later, having married just before. The widow, who is now fourteen, is the *Oong-op* of Cheli. In case this seems unduly complicated I should add that Cheli has inherited the widow of his deceased (classificatory) elder brother, since both are the grandchildren of the same man. The pair are not at present^[582] living together, since Cheli is not yet old enough to co-operate. It is thought, however, that in a couple of years' time he will be able to fulfil his duties as a husband, after which he will bring the girl to his grandfather's home. In the meantime she is living with her mother in a distant village and he goes to spend a few days with her from time to time. No marriage ceremony will be necessary.

* * * * *

It must be obvious to anyone who has read so far that in a⁵⁷⁸ society with the sexual promiscuity permitted by the Lepchas there can be no room for jealousy, if the people are to live in harmony. In a recent article in *The New Statesman and Nation* (June 26th 1937) Dr. Harry Roberts discusses this very subject:

"So far as people who æsthetically and intellectually⁰⁰⁰ matter are concerned," he writes, "the two great causes of marital failure are boredom and jealousy; and the greatest of

773 in whose neighbourhood they had settled, two or three clans often worshipping the same mountain. It became customary, that each clan had to perform an annual sacrifice to the spirit of its particular mountain. In regard to marriage, there is no obstacle—unless a blood relationship exists or that people belong actually to the same clan—that members of two clans, which venerate the same peak, should not intermarry. In case that bride and bridegroom belong to clans, which worship two different mountains, the wife will have to sacrifice after the marriage to the sacred peak of her husband's clan.

● 582 18. They are made from a certain kind of reed; on the top of the stick cuts are made in such a way, that these parts open in the form of a flower. These sticks are regarded as the symbol of the magical power, over which the sorcerer commands.

791

1 [see cat. 116, p. 36. - Analyst]

APRIL, 1848.

LEPCHAS, CUSTOMS AND MARRIAGES.

133

Some¹ are supposed to be antidotes against poison, and hence fetch an enormous price; they are of a peculiar wood, rarer and paler-coloured. I have paid a guinea for one such, hardly different from the common sort, which cost but 4d. or 6d. MM. Huc and Gabet graphically allude to this circumstance, when wishing to purchase cups at Lhassa, where their price is higher, as they are all imported from the Himalaya. The knots from which they are formed, are produced on the roots of oaks, maples, and other mountain forest trees, by a parasitical plant, known to botanists as *Balanophora*.

Their intoxicating drink, which seems more to excite than to debauch the mind, is partially fermented Murwa grain (*Eleusine Coracana*). Spirits are rather too strong to be relished raw, and when a glass of wine is given to one of a party, he sips it, and hands it round to all the rest. A long bamboo flute, with four or six burnt holes far below the mouth-hole, is the only musical instrument I have seen in use among them. When travelling, and the fatigues of the day are over, the Lepchas will sit for hours chatting, telling stories, singing in a monotonous tone, or blowing this flute. I have often listened with real pleasure to the simple music of this rude instrument; its low and sweet tones are singularly Æolian, as are the airs usually played, which fall by octaves: it seems to harmonize with the solitude of their primæval forests, and he must have a dull ear who cannot draw from it the indication of a contented mind, whether he may relish its soft musical notes or not. Though always equipped for the chase, I fancy the Lepcha is no great sportsman; there is little to be pursued in this region, and he is not driven by necessity to follow what there is.

Their marriages are contracted in childhood, and the wife purchased by money, or by service rendered to the

¹ [i.e., wooden cups. - Analyst]

532] future father-in-law, the parties being often united before
533 the woman leaves her parents' roof, in cases where the
payment is not forthcoming, and the bridegroom prefers
giving his and his wife's labour to the father for a stated
period in lieu. On the time of service expiring, or the
585 money being paid up, the marriage is publicly celebrated
by feasting and riot. The females are generally chaste,
581 and the marriage-tie is strictly kept, its violation being
[584] heavily punished by divorce, beating, slavery, &c. In cases
of intermarriage with foreigners, the children belong to the
462 father's country. All the labours of the house, the field,
[567] and march, devolve on the women and children, or slaves
if they have them.

164 Small-pox is dreaded, and infected persons often cruelly
shunned: a suspicion of this or of cholera frequently
emptying a village or town in a night. Vaccination has been
[751] introduced by Dr. Pearson, and it is much practised by
Dr. Campbell; it being eagerly sought. Cholera is scarcely
known at Dorjiling, and when it has been imported thither
has never spread. Disease is very rare amongst the
Lepchas; and ophthalmia, elephantiasis, and leprosy, the
scourges of hot climates, are rarely known. Goitre prevails,*
though not so conspicuously as amongst Bhotceas,

* May not the use of the head instead of the shoulder-strap in carrying loads be a predisposing cause of goitre, by inducing congestion of the laryngeal vessels? The Lepcha is certainly far more free from this disease than any of the tribes of E. Nepal I have mixed with, and he is both more idle and less addicted to the head-strap as a porter. I have seen it to be almost universal in some villages of Bhotceas, where the head-strap alone is used in carrying in both summer and winter crops; as also amongst the salt-traders, or rather those families who carry the salt from the passes to the Nepalese villages, and who very frequently have no shoulder-straps, but invariably head-bands. I am far from attributing all goitre, even in the mountains, to this practice, but I think it is proved, that the disease is most prevalent in the mountainous regions of both the old and new world, and that in these the practice of supporting enormous loads by the cervical muscles is frequent. It is also found in the Himalayan sheep and goats which accompany the salt-traders, and whose loads are supported in ascending, by a band passing under the throat.

23: Benedict ●

184, 192, 582, 591, 602, 611, 613, 614, 616,
618, 621

ALL Southeast Asia
Lepcha AK5

/For lists of kinship terms, and for excellent and detailed information concerning correlations between kinship terminology, patterns of behavior, and social institutions, see category 601./